

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY MADRID
AMEMBASSY LISBON
USMISSION USNATO
DIA WASHDC
AMEMBASSY WARSAW
AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST
AMEMBASSY SOFIA
AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST
USMISSION USBERLIN
AMEMBASSY BERLIN
AMCONSUL BORDEAUX
AMCONSUL LYON
AMCONSUL MARSEILLE
AMCONSUL NICE
AMCONSUL STRASBOURG

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MILITARY ADDRESSEES ALSO FOR POLADS

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TAGS: PINT, FR
SUBJECT: THE PCF'S LENINIST OPPOSITION

1. SUMMARY: CONTESTED ON THE "LIBERAL" SIDE BY COMMUNIST HISTORIAN JEAN ELLEINSTEIN (PARIS 12701), THE PCF LEADERSHIP HAS BEEN ATTACKED EVEN MORE VIGOROUSLY FROM ITS LEFT IN THE WRITINGS OF LEADING MARXIST PHILOSOPHER

LOUIS ALTHUSSER. FOLLOWING ELLEINSTEIN, ALTHUSSER HAS PUBLISHED FOUR ARTICLES IN LE MONDE APRIL 25-28 WHICH ARE REMARKABLE FOR THE VEHEMENCE OF THEIR CRITICISM AND DEMONSTRATE HOW FAR PROTEST CAN GO WITHOUT THE TRADITIONAL COMMUNIST SANCTION OF EXCLUSION FROM THE PARTY. ALTHUSSER ATTRACTS A FOLLOWING IN INTELLECTUAL AND STUDENT CIRCLES, BUT EXERCISES LITTLE INFLUENCE OUTSIDE OF THOSE LIMITED SECTORS. END SUMMARY.

2. A 22ND CONGRESS "NON-CONVERT": LOUIS ALTHUSSER, PHILOSOPHER AND AUTHOR, IS BEST KNOWN FOR HIS OPPOSITION TO THE 22ND PARTY CONGRESS LINE AND ITS DECISION TO ABANDON THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT. THEN, AS NOW, HE ARGUED THAT PCF LEADERSHIP WAS ABANDONING TRADITIONAL MARXIST DOGMA WITHOUT PROVIDING ANY NEW IDEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION AND THAT THE PARTY WOULD BE LEFT IN A DANGEROUS STATE OF LIMBO. ALTHUSSER NOW SAYS THAT GEORGES MARCHAIS HAS DONE EXACTLY THAT, REPLACING "THE CONCRETE ANALYSIS" OF MARXIST/LENINIST THEORY WITH AN AD HOC, FLUCTUATING POLICY WHICH SERVES ONLY TO RATIONALIZE THE DECISIONS TAKEN BY THE LEADERSHIP.

3. OPPORTUNISM DOESN'T PAY: ALTHUSSER JOINS ELLEINSTEIN IN HIS CALL FOR INCREASED DEMOCRACY IN THE PARTY AND IN HIS CONDEMNATION OF THE PCF'S SERIES OF 180 DEGREE POLICY CHANGES (MOST IMPORTANTLY CONCERNING LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THE UNION OF THE LEFT AND THE PS, BUT ALSO ON DEFENSE AND THE NUCLEAR FORCE AND ON THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT). CONTRARY TO PARTY LEADERSHIP CLAIMS, FOR EXAMPLE, THE PCF LINE TOWARD THE PS WAS ANYTHING BUT CONSTANT, SUPPORTING UNION UNTIL THE 1974 21ST CONGRESS, ATTACKING THE PS VIOLENTLY UNTIL THE 22ND CONGRESS IN 1976, RETURNING TO A COOPERATIVE LINE UNTIL THE PS CONGRESS AT NANTES IN JUNE 1977, AND THEN REVERTING AGAIN TO HOSTILITY AND FINALLY LEADING TO DEFECT IN MARCH 1978.

4. WORSE, SAYS ALTHUSSER, THESE CHANGES WERE ALL DONE IN SECRET, HIDDEN AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE BY A CONTINUITY IN PCF RHETORIC WHICH CAMOUFLAGED THE STRATEGIC READJUSTMENTS BEING MADE. CONSEQUENTLY, COMMUNIST MILITANTS WERE TOTALLY CONFUSED AND UNABLE TO EFFECTIVELY CARRY OUT PARTY POLICY. BUT WHAT ALTHUSSER IS REALLY CRITICIZING IS THE PARTY'S ORIGINAL DECISION TO SUPPORT THE UNION OF THE LEFT CONCEPT, A CLEAR CASE IN HIS EYES OF ELECTORAL "OPPORTUNISM" WHICH OBVIOUSLY FAILED AND WHICH HAD TO BE COVERED UP BY PCF LEADERS. IT WAS, FOR EXAMPLE, THE PCF POLITBURO WHICH MADE MITTERRAND THE SINGLE CANDIDATE OF THE LEFT IN 1974 AND THUS ALLOWED

THE PS TO DOMINATE THE ALLIANCE. ONCE THE ERROR WAS
RECOGNIZED, THE PCF HAD TO DO EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO RE-
BALANCE THE POLITICAL EQUATION, I.E., ATTACK THE SOCIAL-
ISTS TO REDUCE THE PS ELECTORATE, WHILE SIMULTANEOUSLY
TALKING UNION IN ORDER TO HIDE ITS OWN STRATEGIC ERRORS.

5. THAT DECISION MADE DEFEAT INEVITABLE BECAUSE ONLY
THE PS COULD ATTRACT THE CENTRIST VOTERS NEEDED FOR A

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MAJORITY, THE PCF HAVING COMPLETELY IGNORED THE MIDDLE-LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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CLASSES EVEN WHILE PREACHING UNION OF THE FRENCH PEOPLE. THE PS BECAME ENEMY NUMBER ONE AND THE REASONS ADVANCED FOR FAILURE TO UPDATE THE COMMON PROGRAM NO MORE THAN PRETEXTS FOR ATTACKING THE PS. HOWEVER, THE LEADERSHIP COULD NEVER ADMIT THIS FUNDAMENTAL REVISION. ONCE A SINGLE MISTAKE WERE ADMITTED, THERE WOULD BE NO TELLING WHERE THE DISCUSSION MIGHT LEAD. THUS, THE OLD REFLEX WON OUT: "THE PARTY IS ALWAYS RIGHT."

6. ROOTS OF FAILURE: WHY DID THESE ERRORS OCCUR? IN BEST MARXIST TRADITION, PARTY LEADERSHIP SIMPLY FAILED IN ITS ANALYSIS OF THE CLASS SITUATION IN FRANCE, FAILED TO ADEQUATELY DEFINE "THE NATURE AND ROLE OF THE PCF AND PS IN THE CLASS STRUGGLE." DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS WITHIN THE PARTY WERE BLOCKED, SO THAT THE REAL DESIRES OF THE WORKING CLASS AND OF THE SOCIALIST LEADERSHIP WERE NEVER KNOWN. THE PCF BECAME COMPLETELY DOMINATED BY ITS OFFICIAL BUREAUCRACY TO THE POINT THAT EVEN THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE TURNED INTO A MERE RUBBER-STAMP FOR POLITBURO DECISIONS. THE STRICT VERTICAL STRUCTURE RENDERED THE AVERAGE MEMBER HELPLESS IN THE FACE OF A PARTY HIERARCHY WHICH CAREFULLY FILTERED ALL INFORMATION. PARTY LEADERSHIP BECAME PERMANENT, LAUNCHING PERIODIC RECRUITMENT CAMPAIGNS IN ORDER TO O

"ELECT A NEW PEOPLE," I.E., TO FIND NEW MEMBERS WHO KNEW NOTHING OF PAST FOLLIES AND WHO COULD BE LAUNCHED INTO BATTLE ONCE AGAIN IN THE NAME OF ALREADY BROKEN "PROMISES" AND ALREADY DISCREDITED "THEORIES".

7. A FORSTRESS UNTO ITSELF: THE PCF IN FRENCH SOCIETY NOW RESEMBLES "THE GARRISON OF A FORTRESS RATHER THAN A FISH IN THE SEA," BECOMING A PRISONER WITHIN ITW OWN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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WALLS. BUT, SAYS ALTHUSSER, THE FORTRESS HAS A FUNCTION ONLY IF ITS TROOPS ARE READY TO PLUNGE INTO THE MASSES AND DO BATTLE. THE PCF HAS NO CHOICE: WITH ONLY ONE-THIRD OF THE WORKING CLASS TO ITS CREDIT, RETIRING TO THE FORTRESS MEANS ISOLATION. HOWEVER, THERE IS A

CHOICE AS TO HOW THE PARTY ENGAGES IN THE BATTLE. RATHER THAN SIMPLY LIQUIDATING THE REVOLUTIONARY TRADITION, "LIBERALIZING" THE PCF SO THAT IT BECOMES "A PARTY LIKE ALL THE OTHERS," THE PCF CAN DRAW ON THE BEST OF ITS REVOLUTIONARY TRADITION IN PLUNGING INTO THE MASS MOVEMENTS OF TODAY. DEMOCRATIC CENTRALISM, FOR EXAMPLE, CAN BE REVISED RATHER THAN ABANDONED SO THAT THE EXPERIENCES AND ANALYSIS OF ITS MEMBERSHIP CAN BE HEARD IN THE MIDST OF THE MASSES. FOR LOUIS ALTHUSSER, MARXIST THEORY CAN BE MADE COMPATIBLE WITH MODERN LIFE, NOT BY AVOIDING THE GREAT SOCIAL ISSUES OF TODAY, BUT BY PENETRATING THEM AND FEEDING ON THEM. THE END RESULT IS CLASSICAL IN ITS CONCEPTION, "A POLICY OF POPULAR UNION, WITHOUT REFORMISM OR SECTARIANISM, FOR THE ACTIVE MOBILIZATION OF THE MASSES AND THE FREE DEVELOPMENT OF THEIR INITIATIVES."
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